



DIAKONIA

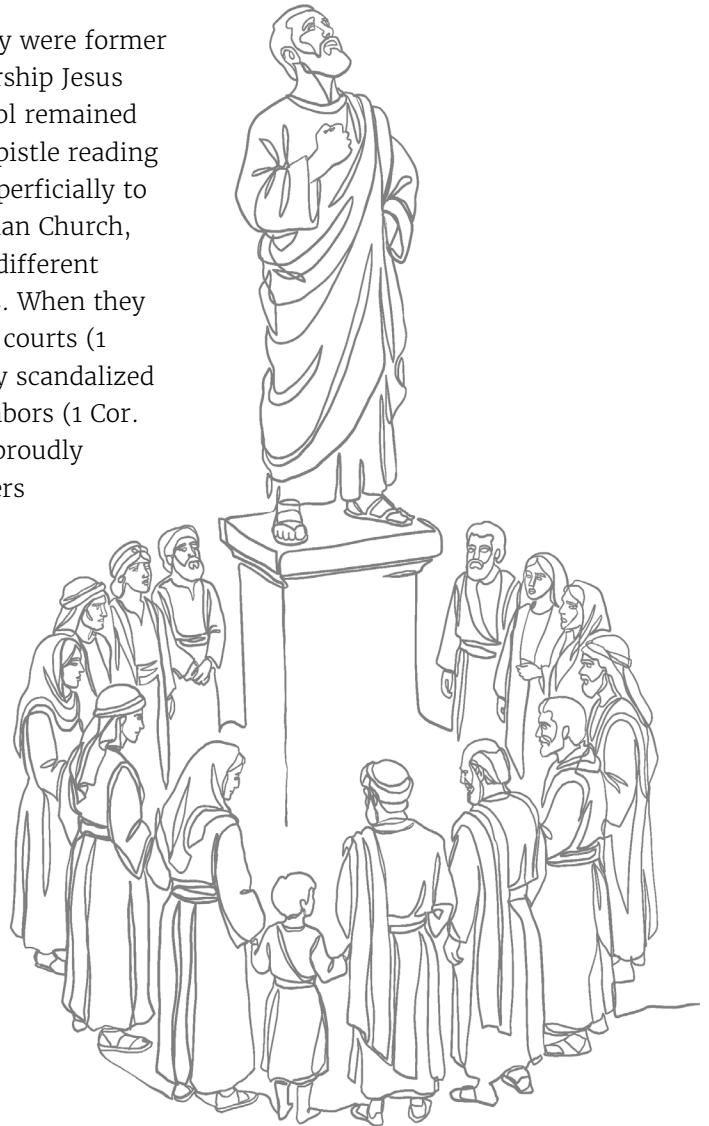
A National Ministry of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

REFLECTIONS FROM TODAY'S READING | *1 Corinthians 9:2-12*

Fr. George Parsenios (HCHC '96)

The false idol of the selfish ego

The Christians in first-century Corinth were confused. They were former pagans who set aside their idols and their false gods to worship Jesus Christ, but their conversion was not complete. One final idol remained to be banished—the false god of their own egos. Today's epistle reading comes from 1 Corinthians, a letter where St. Paul seems superficially to deal with a dozen different problems afflicting the Corinthian Church, but he really addresses just a single problem with a dozen different symptoms—the self-centered arrogance of the Corinthians. When they had a dispute, they dragged fellow Christians into the civic courts (1 Cor. 6). When they had immoral relationships, they blithely scandalized not only their fellow Christians, but even their pagan neighbors (1 Cor. 5). When they gathered for meals, the wealthier members proudly demanded places of honor, allowing less prominent believers to go hungry (1 Cor. 11). In today's epistle reading, St. Paul responds to this arrogance by listing all the rights and freedoms that he himself could claim, but which refuses to demand for the sake of concord in the Church. In our own families and friendships—and especially in our Churches—we must also carefully weigh our words and actions, lest our selfish egos and ambitions create division in the place of peace. In our parishes, for instance, the most qualified people often refuse to serve on parish councils, because parish council debates often devolve into clashes between egos instead of pursuing the common good. Christian marriages also must be inspired by a spirit of mutual sacrifice, and not by a spirit of selfishness, with one spouse only giving and the other only taking. In all of our relationships, we must seek first to serve and not be served, imitating the self-sacrifice of our Lord and the humility of the great Apostle Paul.



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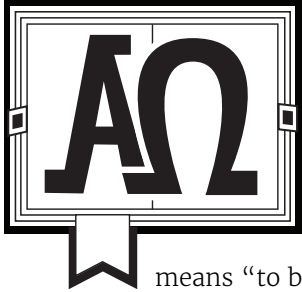
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FROM THE ORIGINAL GREEK: *monastêrion* (μοναστήριον) What does “monastery” mean?

Fr. George Parsenios (HCHC '96)



The Greek word *μοναστήριον*/*monastêrion* is rendered in English as “monastery.” It is a compound noun formed by the combination of two Greek roots. The first root is *μονάζω/monázō*, which means “to be alone,” from *μόνος/mónos*, “solitary, alone.” The second root is *τηριον/têrion*, derived from the Greek verb *τηρεῖν/têreîn*, which means “to keep” or “to cultivate.” Greek words that end in *τηριον/têrion* usually describe places where a certain activity is conducted. For example, a *baptistêrion* is a

place where baptisms are completed. A *thysiaistêrion* is an altar on which a sacrifice (*thysia*) is performed, and a *thymiatêrion* is a vessel in which incense is burned (*thymiama*). A *monastêrion*, therefore, is a place where solitude is cultivated. This does not mean that monks and nuns live completely alone as isolated individuals. While they seek solitude from the rest of the world, most monks and nuns live in communal settings where they pray, eat, and work with other monastics. They conduct their lives separated from the world, but they do so in a community of people devoted to the cultivation of the pursuit of prayerful solitude.



Stained-glass depiction,
L'Église Saint-Irénée in Lyon, France.
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THIS WEEK'S LOOK AT CHURCH HISTORY

Saint Irenaeus of Lyons

On August 23rd, the Orthodox Church commemorates St. Irenaeus of Lyons, a second-century bishop and one of the most significant Fathers of the early Church. His apologetic text, *Against Heresies*—perhaps the first systematic presentation of the Orthodox faith—remains an essential theological resource for the Church. And as a witness of St. Polycarp (69–155) in his youth, Irenaeus stands in a line of direct succession, through St. Ignatius of Antioch (d. 108), of the Apostle John himself.

A native of the Greek-speaking city of Smyrna, Irenaeus served as a priest in Roman Gaul before being elevated to the bishopric of Lugdunum (Lyon) sometime in the 170's. Little is known of Irenaeus' episcopacy, other than that he vigorously defended the “orthodox” faith against various Gnostic “heresies” (terms he helped popularize) and perhaps died a martyr after 191.

Irenaeus also notably participated in the Quartodeciman controversy, wisely counseling Pope Victor to not hastily excommunicate the Anatolian Christian communities who customarily celebrated Easter on the Jewish Passover (the 14th day of Nisan)—a timeless lesson in tactful pastoral care.

Controversial Issues: How the Church Guides Us

Rev. Dr. Stylianos "Stanley" S. Harakas (1932–2020)



Throughout its history, the Orthodox Church has dealt with controversial issues by a process which addresses the "mind of the Church." When an issue arises for which there is no clear-cut, widely and readily acknowledged tradition, and about which there is honest divergence of opinion as to what view genuinely expresses the teaching of the Church, a process begins which may eventually lead to the formulation of an official Church teaching. A classical example from the early period of the Church is the formulation of the Church doctrines about the person of Jesus Christ, which began with the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea (325) and concluded with the Seventh Ecumenical Council (787).

Over this four hundred and sixty-three year period, the Church clarified its understanding and teaching of the revelation regarding Jesus Christ. At the center of this process stood the Ecumenical Councils, which constituted the final and most authoritative agent for the formulation of doctrine, pending the acceptance of their decrees by the entire Church. For the Orthodox Church, this meant that such issues could not, and should not, be solved by appeal to a single bishop or leader, no matter how honored and respected he might be. It meant, rather, that the Church set its mind to resolving the issue through a corporate approach which drew on the whole tradition of the records of God's revelation.

In practice this meant reference to the Bible and to the living Tradition of the Church by persons seeking to comprehend how the tradition spoke to the new questions being raised. Questions were never raised just for intellectual curiosity nor for the sake of systematic organization. They nearly always were raised because in one way or another their outcome would bear on our salvation and the truths of the Faith. A response would be made whenever a new teaching seemed to be at variance with tradition in one way or another, and consequently not in harmony with the received tradition of revelation, even though the response might have to deal with yet undefined topics. Thus, the great Fathers of the Church, such as Athanasios, Basil, the Gregorys and Chrysostom, not only criticized the false teachings of heresiarchs such as Arius, but proposed formulations of the truth as well. These became the subject of study, debate, and finally, the decisions of Councils on every level – local, regional, provincial and ecumenical, all guided by the Holy Spirit.



PRAYER

"Lord Jesus Christ, grant me humility to seek Your truth through Your Holy Church. Help me to trust the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to honor the wisdom of Scripture and Holy Tradition, and to seek understanding in every controversial issue with love, patience, and faithfulness. Amen."



COLORING PAGE

Dormition of the Theotokos

Just For Kids!

(...and the young at heart)

Color this beautiful icon of the Dormition (Falling Asleep) of the Theotokos, which we celebrated yesterday on August 15. Surrounded by the apostles, the Mother of God peacefully rests as Christ lovingly receives her. As you color, remember God's promise of eternal life and the special place of the Theotokos in the Church! Thank you to ByziMom for providing this beautiful coloring sheet!

